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# An Appreciation of Henri Gheon

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An Appreciation of Henri Ghéon

by

Sister Mary Oliver Donlin

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of  
the Graduate School of Loyola University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts.

Loyola University

Chicago

1939

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## An Appreciation of Henri Ghéon

### Introduction

To one who has followed closely the literary trend in France for the past few decades, it is evident that there exists in that field an intensely Catholic spirit. The major literary productions for the past fifty years have been inspired by Catholicism. There is no field that has not been reanimated. The life-giving breath of this new spirit has quickened all branches of French literature.

It is indeed almost a paradox to state that instead of being caught in the vortex of doubt and unbelief which has swept the fair land of France, many of the greatest minds have been drawn gradually but surely to their Creator. A veritable thirst for the Divine has taken possession of the world of letters. "It seemed to be the desire of God that in these latter days the artist should return home."<sup>1</sup> In fact, modern French literature would be inconceivable if we were to efface the names of such writers as Huysman, Verlaine, Bourget, Bazin, Jammes, Claudel, Péguy, Maritain, Bernanos, and Mauriac.

It is not my purpose, however, to prove the evident fact that France is undergoing a Catholic literary revival.

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Calvert, The Catholic Literary Revival, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1935, p. 357.

"The revival there (in France) is unquestionably the most outstanding literary and intellectual event of our times."<sup>2</sup> My present intention in undertaking this work is to make better known and appreciated one of the most zealous and optimistic as well as one of the foremost literary figures in modern France. I refer to Henri Ghéon, who holds a unique place at the present time in the rich field of French Catholic literature. He has left the imprint of his genius in almost every field. He is considered a poet, a novelist, a critic, a hagiographer, and primarily a dramatist. He assumed the prodigious task of making a permanent reality his ideal of a truly Christian theater. By what means and to what extent he has realized this noble ideal will be gradually developed in this work. Ghéon has the feeling, the intuition, the art, to a greater degree than any of his predecessors, of presenting the medieval mystery plays to a modern world, and through them, convincing one of the reality of spiritual things.

One of Ghéon's great purposes in his literary work is to make the saints better known, more human, and for that reason more lovable. He has accomplished this purpose gloriously in his dramas. He has also been persuaded by the earnest solicitations of his friends to write biographies of saints. In these works, as he says, he "tries to

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 356.

bring the saints to the modern world." That he admirably succeeds in his purpose may be attested by any reader of his few biographies. Nevertheless, he does not feel free in this method of presenting the saints, and we are glad that he goes back to drama, the field in which his great talent is at its perfection, to give us the pictures of the saints.

It is my purpose to discuss the early life of Ghéon, the factors influencing his unique vocation, and to analyze his representative plays. One may try to determine from them whether his ideal has been realized. However, one must remember that a drama must be seen on the stage in order to be properly judged. No doubt, too, Ghéon, like many another literary genius, will be fully appreciated only when judged in the proper perspective by future generations. Yet we are in accord with the prophetic words of one of his great contemporaries when he says, "Dans la suite de temps le nom de Ghéon s'effacera peut-être, car il aime l'ombre comme les artistes et artisans du moyen âge, qui rapportaient leurs talents à Dieu. Mais,...ces mystères ...resteront ou reparaîtront..."<sup>3</sup>

As long as there will be a Catholic audience, hence as

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<sup>3</sup>Léon Daudet, "L'Oeuvre de Bédier," L'Action Française, (Sept. 18, 1938), p. 1.

long as time will last, the little grain that Henri Ghéon has sown in this, our twentieth century, will continue to bear fruit. All honor to such a man!

## Chapter I

### Early Life of Ghéon

Henri Ghéon<sup>4</sup> was born in 1875 at Bray-sur-Seine in the department of Seine et Marne. His mother was from Normandy and his father descended from an old bourgeois family of Beauce. It is from his autobiography L'Homme Né de la Guerre that we get the best glimpse of his ancestral stock, a thoroughly Catholic one. In a truly poetic way he depicts his earliest impression of himself seated on his saintly grandmother's knees playing with her rosary. More vivid still is the memory of the little group in the red room: Ghéon and his sister with their dear mother, kneeling every morning and evening before the crucifix, reciting the Pater, Ave, the Credo and Confiteor. Even at a very early age, his dramatic instinct was attracted by the richness and beauty of the ceremonies of the Church. He could still remember waiting for the procession of Corpus Christi which was to pass through the streets of the village. For was not his own sister among the group of little flower girls who proceeded the Blessed Sacrament, scattering rose petals "d'un geste court, comme on donne à manger aux petits oiseaux." Attendance at Sunday Mass was for him "le luxe

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<sup>4</sup>Ghéon is his literary name; Vangeon, his family name.



de chaque semaine." His first Communion, preceded by a retreat, and his Confirmation in the Faith were outstanding events in his life. When he looks back to those days of grace he can not but exclaim, "O douceur, O sage tendresse! O silence, O fraîcheur de la semaine consacrée...Je ne m'explique pas encore comment je pus résilier si tôt ce pacte solennelle avec la joie."<sup>5</sup>

In spite of this picture of a beautiful and inspiring Catholic home life we discover upon investigation that there was a most important element lacking to make the religious environment of young Ghéon perfect. The head of the Vangeon family was not practicing his faith. Henri experienced the sad effects of the division that exists in many a home today. "Entre la mère bonne croyante et le père impie...le jeune homme hésite, balance...il a deux exemples et un seul chemin."<sup>6</sup> Such conflicting forces would affect a character even less sensitive than that of Henri. The impressionable youth would sooner or later be forced to make a choice between religion and atheism. The crucial moment came one Sunday morning. The young lad of fifteen had come home from the Lycée for his Easter vacation. His mother called

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<sup>5</sup> Henri Ghéon, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, Temoignage d'un Converti, Nouvelle Revue Française, Paris, 1919, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

to him to be ready for Mass. He had made his choice, "Je n'y vais pas...Je ne crois plus!"<sup>7</sup> He had lost his faith.

Although Henri Ghéon tells us that he was not able to analyze the gradual working of evil in his soul, he clearly indicates its source. He felt that, coupled with his father's example, his defection was largely due to the insufficiency of the religious instruction following his first Holy Communion. All the time and attention was given to the acquisition of human knowledge. That which pertained to God was relegated to the background, the chaplain being allowed only from one to two hours a week for his classes. These proved uninteresting lessons, presented in an unattractive manner. They offered a sad contrast to the vivacious discussions led by the professors of science and the humanities. No wonder Ghéon says, "Notre connaissance de Dieu ne sortait de là ni plus claire ni plus profonde et ni seulement rafraîchie."<sup>8</sup> It goes without saying that disdain for all that was holy, and the anti-clerical atmosphere of the entire country easily filtered into the minds of the susceptible adolescents of the period. Their interest was more easily captivated and their minds more avid for

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

beautiful paintings, poetry and drama than for abstract theology. A combination of these circumstances caused Henri Ghéon, at about the age of fifteen, completely to lose his faith. And, what seems almost unbelievable, he lived for twenty years "sans Dieu et sans besoin de Dieu."<sup>9</sup>

At the age of twenty Henri Gheon entered the literary field. The book of his debut Chansons d'Aube was published in 1897. The following year another collection appeared under the title of La Solitude d'Eté. These were usually short poems in which the author proved to be skillful in the handling of "vers libres." They contained no long-drawn-out or tiresome effusions nor heavily veiled notions, but

une impression de nature, de campagne, d'air, d'atmosphère, d'occupations rustiques, dont le caractère semblait rapprocher ses recherches de celle de Francis Jammes ou encore de Viélé-Griffin...même attention aux métiers et aux mœurs des villageois, même méticuleuse précision à les définir.<sup>10</sup>

Ghéon, even in the dawn of his literary career did not, as he himself says, submit blindly to the influence of any master.<sup>11</sup> He never belonged to any of the prevalent schools of literature. In 1905 he published Algérie in which he showed himself in full possession of his own style, his

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> André Fontaines, "Les Poèmes," Mercure de France, (Feb. Mar., 1937).

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Ghéon to the author, (Nov. 1, 1938).

own personality, as these lines indicate:

Ils ne l'ont point connu, le rire  
 gazelle des libre espace  
 glycine du libre sol  
 jet des libres coeurs  
 chants des libres races  
 qui exalte.....  
 point ne console  
 et meurt  
 des qu'elles songent à mourir  
 --si!  
 à la bouche du vainqueur,  
 mais comme une braise ardente  
 à bruler les yeux  
 qu'ils ont detournés.....

André Fontaines says of this collection: "Le spectacle des beaux paysages, la jouissance des climats enchantés emplissaient d'aise et d'enthousiasme son coeur, sa voix s'exaltait en chants de joie mais il n'abandonnait rien de la vieille passion pour le précis, le défini, son trait restait net, sa couleur véridique, tres sûre."<sup>12</sup>

At this time we find him leagued with a group of talented young writers under the direction of Edouard Ducôté. They wrote for l'Ermitage and later for le Mercure de France. These young artists were the declared enemies of that pure materialism which reigned in the most powerful literary circles of the day. They had recourse to the cult of Art, to the adoration of Beauty for its own sake, scorning popularity, renown or material profits. Their love of Art replaced their lost faith:

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<sup>12</sup> Andre Fontaines, "Les Poèmes," Mercure de France, (Feb. Mar., 1937).

L'Art prenant le pas sur l'amour ramasse le sceptre de Dieu qui est tombé en déshérence. Dans le culte de l'Art nous pensons échapper au monde, à la fuite des jours et surmonter un médiocre destin. Le véritable artiste va placer son ambition sur terre nécessairement mais par delà sa vie terrestre dans le profond des siècles à venir. Indifférents aux succès du présent du moins autant qu'homme peut l'être, nous rêvons en secret de laisser après nous, de léguer à nos descendants, non une patrie bien assise, non un idéal éprouvé, mais quelques morceaux réussis, une oeuvre, un livre, moins: un poème; moins: une strophe harmonieuse, capable de chanter sur les lèvres des hommes longtemps après que nous nous serons tus.<sup>13</sup>

It was indeed a risk for a young writer to depend on his pen for his daily bread. The Vangeon family, well aware of Henri's literary talent and desirous of giving him some means of securing a livelihood, arranged to have him take up the study of medicine. He attended the Faculté de Paris and received his diploma there. He practiced medicine in Bray-sûr-Seine, thus supporting himself, his mother, his widowed sister and her two children. At the same time he cultivated his talent for writing, continuing to contribute to the Mercure de France. Later, with Copeau and Schlumberger, he and Gide founded the Nouvelle Revue Française.

It was by mere chance that Henri Ghéon made the acquaintance of one who was to have a profound influence upon his literary formation. The young Ghéon was asked to write an article on André Gide for the Mercure de France.

<sup>13</sup> H. Ghéon, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, p. 20.

He wrote to Gide, paid him a visit, and from that meeting a friendship was born that was to last twenty years. Ghéon passed months at a time with his literary companions at Gide's estate at Cuverville in Normandy. During long walks in the country, at dinner gatherings "long entretiens sur la littérature occupaient les jours de ces êtres qui ne vivaient que pour l'Art et la Beauté...Comment un esprit ouvert et richement doué comme l'était Ghéon, n'aurait-il pas profité de ces solides entretiens, de ces leçons d'un grand maître."<sup>14</sup>

During the twenty years that followed, we find these two friends together visiting museums, admiring paintings, traveling in Italy and Asia Minor. There can be no doubt concerning the effect produced on Ghéon by this contact with a writer of such rare culture. Not that Gide had any moral influence on his friend--Ghéon seemed impermeable to any moral doctrine at this time of his life--but these exchanges of ideas on art and its discipline hindered Ghéon from falling into the banal. We may say with truth that Gide prepared Ghéon to serve Christ. Moreover, Ghéon was to return to God through Gide.

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<sup>14</sup> Marcel Raymond, "Henri Ghéon et André Gide," La Relève, 6<sup>e</sup> Cahier, (Oct. 1938), pp. 176, 177.

## Chapter II

### His Conversion

In his autobiography, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, with ardor mounting up to lyricism, Ghéon tells of his return to God after twenty years of estrangement. But during these years of impressionable adolescence, developing artist and fully realized manhood, were there any factors which in some way contributed to his conversion? Or was his a gradual development, like Paul Bourget's? Like Jacques Rivière, did he suffer from torturing thoughts of doubt? Let us carefully trace the initial steps in his conversion.

As we have already discovered, his dominant passion was his love of Art. This All-merciful and All-wise God, Who knows how to draw good from evil, Who takes men as they are, making use of their very passions to lead them to Him, willed that the avenues which Divine Grace would choose to reach the depths of the soul of Henri Ghéon would be those of patriotism and the cult of Art.

His love for France prompted the verses of his debut, Chansons d'Aube, (1897). But, as in the case of so many of his contemporaries, it was the Dreyfus Affair which gave him the first impetus in the right direction. He says, "j'eus la révélation inopinée de ma foi française à l'occasion de l'affaire Dreyfus."<sup>15</sup> During this crisis we

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<sup>15</sup>H. Ghéon, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, p. 23.

find him on the verge of breaking that last bond which still held him to his beloved country. He joined the ranks of the "Dreyfusites" because he sincerely believed that their attitude was in accordance with human justice. The honor of his country, he thought, demanded such action. However, he was soon disillusioned and he then realized that, "il dépendait de quelque chose d'immuable et de profond, qu'il n'était pas un être livré au hasard, qu'il se rattachait à un ordre."<sup>16</sup> He saw his country so divided that one individual triumphed over a great social order. It was more than a question of the guilt of one man. The "Affair" became a party maneuver. France was torn asunder as she had not been for a whole generation. Such a state of affairs quickened into new life the smoldering fire of loyalty to tradition. He realized that France could maintain that lofty position which was her due by respecting and upholding established authority. From that time on, Ghéon attached himself to those who "défendaient l'existence morale et matérielle de la France."<sup>17</sup>

There is no evidence however, that he was at this time influenced by the ever intensifying Catholic spirit in the literature of the country. The three B's: Bourget,

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<sup>16</sup>

A. Praviel, "Un Primitif de France M. Henri Ghéon," Correspondents 297 (Oct. 25, 1924), pp. 181-195.

<sup>17</sup>H. Ghéon, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, p. 24.



Barrès, and Bruntière, who exerted a lasting influence on so many others, had no effect on him. Not that he did not admire them--but he did not follow them in their return to the Church via tradition. His proud independence was too deep-rooted to allow him to submit to Catholic orthodoxy. It was on this very point that he conceived a veritable hostility towards Claudel, whose lyric genius had so aroused his enthusiasm. That Claudel should try to convert his friend Gide! Where was his regard for the rights of the individual? Many years later Ghéon tells us the effect Claudel had on his religious training: "Claudel m'en aurait plutôt détournée. Et ce fut lui pourtant qui déposa la précieuse semence dans l'âme du lieutenant de vaisseau Dupouey, par lequel je revins à Dieu."<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, he was delighted with the biting invective which Léon Bloy showered on the so-called Catholics because of their mediocre piety and their pharisaical human respect.<sup>19</sup> However, of all his contemporaries, it was Péguy who did the most to hasten his conversion and exerted the most telling influence on him, though at the time Ghéon was unaware of it. He tells us, "à mon insu Péguy m'a préparé

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<sup>18</sup> H. Ghéon, "Le Renouveau Catholique dans les Lettres Française," Le Devoir, Montreal (Aug. 17, 1938), p. 6.  
<sup>19</sup> Claude Hurtubise, "Un Entretien avec Henri Ghéon," La Relève, 6<sup>e</sup> Cahier, (Oct. 1938), p. 163.

à croire."<sup>20</sup>

His meeting with Péguy was purely coincidental. About 1909 Ghéon moved to Orsay, France. He learned that Péguy was a neighbor of his. Péguy's love for humanity, coupled with his strong personality and power of conviction, aroused Ghéon from his idealistic dreams of "Art for Art's sake," brought him down to earth and to a keener realization of his obligations to society. In discussing the factors which prepared the way for his later conversion, Ghéon says of Péguy:

La notion de la paroisse qui est, en vérité, la pierre d'angle de sa pensée et de son oeuvre, reprit force de vie en moi, Il est très malaise, quand on se tourne vers la France, de faire abstraction de son passé religieux: je le saluais avec révérence, avec émotion, mais sans me sentir engagé. Péguy ne pouvait pas me convertir; je me laissais porter vers lui avec d'autant moins de défense que je le savais affranchi des pratiques de la religion. Le pire qui eût pu m'arriver à son école, c'eût été de me rendre à pied jusqu'au sanctuaire de Chartres ...et de n'y pas pénétrer, comme lui.<sup>21</sup>

We shall see later how, during the Great War, this same love of country and of humanity tormented him, and ultimately brought him to his knees in humble supplication to the Father of all mankind. But as yet, he is still the pagan, the lover of Art for its own sake.

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<sup>20</sup>H. Ghéon, "Le Renouveau Catholique dans les Lettres Françaises," Le Devoir, Montreal, (August 17, 1938), p. 6.  
<sup>21</sup>Claude Hurtubise, "Un Entretien avec Henri Ghéon," La Relève, 6<sup>e</sup> Cahier, (Oct. 1938), p. 162.

Mon paradis unique, c'était l'art, transposition du réel sur un plan d'ordre, de beauté, et de liberté supérieur aux choses et aux hommes. Il me permettait de sauvegarder la notion du spirituel. Car, notez bien ceci, mon paganisme, à l'image de l'antique Grèce, n'était pas un matérialisme et je me gaussais volontiers des prétentions de la science moderne à résoudre en équations tous les mystères de la création. Je réservais une marge à l'inconnaissable et le poète, selon moi, les deux pieds fortement posés sur la terre, se devait de plonger le front dans le ciel.<sup>22</sup>

It was in this state of exaltation that Henri Ghéon visited Italy in 1912 in company with his friend, André Gide. We may consider it the second great spiritual shock. He himself calls it the "prologue of his conversion." His artistic sense was captivated by all he saw, but in contemplating the frescoes of Giotto and Angelico he was stirred to the very fibers of his being. "L'art m'avait déjà transporté mais jamais aussi haut...J'étais tout près de croire et d'adorer...mais qui?...L'esprit qui avait animé d'un tel amour l'âme de simples hommes et guidé leur main sur le mur."<sup>23</sup> He realized that these works of art were the fruits of a religion which was formerly his. Yet, after that feeling of exaltation and religious sensibility had passed, he was content with having made greater strides intellectually, and with having gleaned additional experiences which he might make use of in his writings.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>23</sup>H. Ghéon, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, pp. 27, 28.

Two months after his return from Florence, his mother was killed in an accident. The angel of sorrow has been known to have had a refining influence on the most indifferent. It seemed as though God was trying every available approach to this straying sheep. Would the miracle of grace be accomplished now? He held in his arms the mangled body of the one he loved most in life and assisted coldly and ironically while a priest administered the last sacraments. Rebellion against God's will was his master passion during the entire bitter trial. During the funeral Mass he actually made an act of disbelief denying the Real Presence saying, "tu n'est pas, Non! tu ne peux pas être, tu n'aurais pas pris ce que j'aimais après l'avoir ainsi meurtri..."<sup>24</sup> The depth of this fall, he tells us, shows to what a height he had risen after his religious experiences in Italy. For, he says, addressing his Maker, "Je ne vous aurais pas nié si je n'avais pas été si près de croire."

In 1914 the call to arms resounded throughout all of Europe; for Henri Ghéon it will be a preparation for the call of God. The final surrender of this proud soul to the humble Son of God will be brought about by Divine Grace, through the instrumentality of a simple army captain, one

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

in whom was united the gifts of an artist and the virtues of a saint.

In response to the call of the "Patrie" Ghéon and Gide returned in haste from Asia Minor where they had gone for the cause of Art. Gide devoted himself to work among the Belgian refugees. Ghéon offered his medical services to his country, as certain disabilities exempted him from active military service. It is significant to note that he enlisted, as it were, in spite of all the circumstances which favored his remaining at home. He tells us, "Je ne partais pas de gaîté de coeur, mais malgré moi, poussé par une force intime qui ne demandait pas mon avis."<sup>25</sup>

Before Ghéon left for the front, Gide urged him to make the acquaintance of a friend of his, a certain Lieutenant of the Marines, Captain Pierre Dupouey. Gide felt that these two men would have much in common and in the long days of carnage and bloodshed which were to follow it would be as an oasis in the desert for Ghéon to find someone with whom he could share his esthetic sentiments.

At the beginning of the new year we find Ghéon at the Belgian Front at Nieuport in the thick of the fray. "La guerre impitoyable est tout autour de nous," he tells us.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

Yet the poet in him keeps his senses attuned to other sights and sounds than the roar of the cannons, the explosions of shells and the crumbling of ruined edifices. The North Sea, reflecting the multitude of colors, and ever changing sand dunes reminded him of his delightful trip to Algeria. His soul was filled with almost a pantheistic exaltation.

Upon discovering that Captain Dupouey, to whom Gide had referred him, was in the vicinity, Ghéon endeavored to locate him, but in those days of uncertainty it seemed impossible to contact him. Yet this meeting was to take place sooner than he anticipated. On January 28, 1915, just one hour before a great assault, Captain Dupouey made a surprise visit to the little army-surgeon. How dramatically Ghéon tells of the "entrée" of this "annonciateur de la grâce"--an acquaintance that was to change the whole trend of his life and his work. Indeed it was the beginning of a great drama. "...l'artillerie prélude, tumulte encore incohérente, celui de l'orchestre avant l'overture quand chacun accorde son instrument. Les trajectoire rasant le toit qui nous abrite; la mansarde bourdonne comme l'intérieur d'un violon ...A ce moment la porte s'ouvre...C'est Dupouey."<sup>26</sup>

With his customary precision Ghéon records every minute detail of this visit. He found the captain to be a man

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

"décidé et décisif, mais dans un sens tout imprévu...La voix...formule sans cesse, en quelques mots frappants, une pensée d'arrière--fond qui va plus loin que la parole... nul homme ne m'a paru plus assuré de ce qu'il dit...Sans s'en douter il a chargé d'âme: la mienne."<sup>26</sup>

On only two other occasions did they meet. Ghéon paid a visit to Dupouey's encampment. He observed with keen satisfaction the simplicity of his lodging, the familiar and almost fatherly manner in which he treated his men. It was quite evident that they idolized their captain. He seemed to love art, literature, in fact, life itself, yet with a certain aloofness which mystified Ghéon. In the three casual visits these two men had with each other there was nothing extraordinary in their conversation. Dupouey did not discuss philosophy, theology or religion with his friend. In fact Ghéon did not concern himself as to whether or not Dupouey was a Christian. It was not so much what he said as it was a certain indefinable quality which Ghéon detected. There was a vital hidden force which held this simple captain apart from all men he had thus far known and raised him above the mere dilettante, the lover of Art for its own sake. But strange as it seems the death of Dupouey was needed to reveal to Ghéon that the living source

of this secret influence was personal sanctity, a life in harmony with God's Holy Will, "Notre poème n'a pris forme qu'à l'instant où il s'achevait: dans la mort."

After leaving the Church the Easter of 1915 (for Ghéon went as a "spectateur") he heard of the death during that very night of a marine officer in the neighboring sector. It was not until fifteen days later that he learned that the dead captain was Dupouey. He asked himself why he should be so upset over a death--he who had lived through eight months of bloodshed. What was Dupouey to him, that he should mourn for him as he did for his own mother? Ghéon determined to find his friend's grave. He went there on foot, and solemnly took the little piece of blessed palm that his sister had sent him and attached it to the cross. It was all he had to offer. In a letter to Gide that April he said: "Ai-je prie pour lui? Je le crois bien ou c'est tout comme... Dans l'exaltation où je suis, je suis capable de prier sans croire... de croire pour les autres, ne croyant pas pour moi."<sup>27</sup> Ghéon then went to the cantonment of the marines in order to discover the particulars of Dupouey's death; and more, if possible. Could anyone fathom the mystery of his secret influence? Each of his men had his

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 85.



own words of praise: "Brave comme pas un," "Ménager de ses hommes," "C'était une intelligence d'élite."<sup>28</sup> Yet-- he was not satisfied; not even these, his intimate friends, could give him the one thing he wanted. What was there about this man that held him, that seemed to live on? In the center of a group of jolly young marines Ghéon discovered the Chaplain of the regiment. He surely would know! In the conversation that ensued, the simple-hearted priest, supposing Ghéon to be a friend of long standing, laid bare the noble soul of the departed captain. He recounted their last conversation on Holy Saturday, just before Dupouey went to the trenches to meet his death. Surrounded by the horrors of death, he thought only of the Resurrection. With a sort of exaltation he said: "Je vous servirai la messe?...Nous chanterons l'Alleluia de toute notre voix, de toute notre âme."<sup>29</sup> At midnight he was killed. That chaplain added his own conviction as to the reason for this untimely death: "Son allégresse était si forte et le don de soi si complet, réclamait en échange une telle fête de Dieu, que Dieu ne put résister au plaisir de la lui donner toute entière."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

The chaplain offered Ghéon a recent letter from Mme. Dupouey to the captain. This privileged glance into his friend's very sanctum completed the revelation. He had the secret! personal sanctity. Almost instantaneously the sorrow for his departed friend was turned into joy, joy to admiration, an admiration a thousand times greater than that evoked by all the beauty of this world put together. Here was something enduring. Such a life could not end with the grave. It must know and enjoy a glory without end, the glory of heaven. "Un vrai saint, un vrai miracle, et un poème qui s'achève toutes parties harmonisées au sein de Dieu qui l'a conçu."<sup>31</sup>

No doubt one would expect that enthusiasm born so rapidly would soon cool, and the whole incident would be forgotten, like the experience in Florence. However, from that time on Ghéon's conscience, formerly so tranquil in its false security, knew no rest. On the one hand he could not bring himself to adhere to Catholic orthodoxy: the idea of practicing the Faith was actually repugnant. Yet, the moral certitude of the sanctity of his friend, and the immortality and eternal bliss which he was convinced that friend enjoyed was the constant theme of his

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

thoughts. He longed for an intercessor, a guide, and sought such a one in his dead friend. The confusion of sentiments which beset him are best expressed in the poem Recours to which his troubled soul gave expression:

Ami, vous êtes ma pensée  
 Lorsque le danger m'entre-ouvre la route  
 Je vous y suis  
 Et c'est votre image qui luit  
 Au ciel que j'aime et dont je doute,  
 .....  
 Ami, vous êtes le reflet  
 De Dieu dans mon âme terrestre:  
 Je vous garde, comme un secret,  
 Comme un talisman  
 Comme une promesse!  
 Ce que de vous j'attends  
 Le sais-je?  
 Si je le savais?

Ami, vous êtes mon attente,  
 Mon recours et ma dernière heure:  
 Je l'ai trop peu mérité, ce bonheur  
 Qui m'inquiète et qui me tente;  
 La pensée du vôtre est douce et mon coeur,  
 Ami, s'en contente.

Ami, le peu que j'ai de foi  
 Je vous l'offre, priez pour moi.<sup>32</sup>

Being desirous that his friend Gide would know the gradual change that was taking place within him, he sent the above lines of Recours to him, telling him "jamais cri plus sincère, plus spontané, plus impossible à contenir n'était sorti de moi."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

But what he revealed to Gide, he was jealously careful to hide from his comrades in arms. They knew nothing of his interior struggles, neither of his disbelief nor of his new-born hope and desire to believe. To them his attendance at Mass each Sunday was not remarkable. No one was aware that he went, not in the spirit of faith and obedience but--"en spectateur, pour occuper une heure de mes matinées de dimanche et faire comme mes camarades, auxquels je n'ouvrais pas mon incrédulité."<sup>34</sup> If at the moment of Consecration he was moved, it was because of exterior influences "à cause de clairs qui sonnent", or at the thought of his friend who had worshipped at the same ceremony. The image of the Crucified One, however, called forth neither pity nor love. He felt it was sufficient that he loved and hoped in and for his departed friend.

On another occasion he tells, "Je me fais un devoir d'assister à l'office chaque dimanche, et...je préfère m'y rendre seul; je cherche en quelque sorte le tête-à-tête avec l'Esprit. A l'ancienne église du lieu située dans le quartier anglais, je suis certain de ne pas rencontrer mes camarades."<sup>35</sup> We must not conclude that this aloofness in regard to the state of his soul rendered him either morose

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

or gloomy. Joy was always the keynote in his life. His good humor caused his company to be desired and sought for, "Mes camarades, qui ne sont pas dans le secret, ne voient guère en moi que sourire, et je compose, en pleine crise, de petites chansons pour eux..."<sup>36</sup>

However, although God had deprived him of the consolation of a confidant among his companions, He provided him with an understanding and sympathetic friend in the person of Mme. Dupouey, the captain's widow. Her correspondence gave him a more intimate knowledge of his departed friend. She sent him the captain's private notes. These offered a ray of light and of comfort to the struggling soul. It was so encouraging for Ghéon to learn that Dupouey, too, had gone through a crisis such as he was enduring at present that he had

traversé l'erreur et des états moins pur... admirait les mêmes oeuvres, il cultivait la société spirituelle, des mêmes écrivains...il se baignait à la même musique; il avait fait d'un libre esprit, le tour des mêmes joies et des mêmes pensées; il a conclu en se liant à Dieu d'un acquiescement absolu.<sup>37</sup>

He tells us that the more he felt leagued to his "saint" in error, the more he felt able to follow him in the way of truth. We find him assiduously reading Dupouey's note book

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

and studying the favorite authors of his friend. But the return was slow work. He wrote to Mme. Dupouey that he was still a pagan at heart. "Je veux la foi sans les principes"<sup>38</sup>

Occasionally the divine call was well nigh overpowering. On a certain Sunday at High Mass Ghéon observed a young English officer go to the altar railing to receive Holy Communion--the only one of the entire body present to perform this outward expression of his faith and love. Ghéon's admiration was so aroused by this "élan irrésistible de la créature à la rencontre de son Dieu,"<sup>39</sup> that he was seized with an intense desire to follow him. But by evening of the same day he had completely forgotten the incident.

On another occasion his love of country aroused the dormant spark of love of God. It was the eve of the great offensive of Artois and Champagne. An ardent desire to be a worthy brother of those who were offering their lives for their country, a desire to help them, to be united with them in faith as well as in thought took possession of Ghéon.

Quelque chose de neuf, de doux, de saint, monte et déborde, quelque chose que je reconnais et que j'envisage lucidement, l'irrésistible élan de la prière. Je dois une prière à mes frères

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<sup>38</sup>

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

Ibid., p. 147.

les combattants, une prière à la patrie. Il ne suffira pas d'un cri. Je veux des mots précis, plus beaux que ceux que mon amour pourrait trouver dans son langage, plus efficaces que ne sont les mots humains. Je cherche au fond de mon passé et j'y retrouve intacts, éternels, les mots mêmes de ma première prière d'enfant. Oui! je retrouve un "Notre Père," et je le dis!"<sup>40</sup>

After twenty-five years of silence the God-given prayer had persisted in that God-forsaken soul! Up to that time, the heaven to which he aspired without belief, consisted only of a friend, a saint; but now he realized that he had there a Father, the Father of all. From that time he did not have to argue as to whether or not he should pray. He prayed "comme à habitude" and in the future whether his country was enjoying a victory or suffering a defeat, he tells us, "je prie contre-cœur, je prie quand même." Faith had not made a complete victory but from a soul that humbles itself in prayer, divine grace will not be withheld. He wrote to Mme. Dupouey that he believed there was some little progress evident. "Je sens naître une sorte de grâce. Spontanément j'ai retrouvé sur mes lèvres une prière."<sup>41</sup>

The reading of the Gospel revealed to him the living Personality of Christ, so long unknown to him. He formed the habit of re-reading in the evening the text that he had

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

heard explained at Holy Mass. Yet he realized that it was one thing to hear and another to do. The virtues recommended in the Gospel were not mere abstractions. They must be put in practice. He forced himself to leave his beloved books to devote himself with less reserve to care for the poverty-stricken miners of the village in which his sector was encamped. This charity was soon to receive its recompense. He was beginning to recognize again the real purpose of life: "faire en soi, de soi, sinon une grande âme, une âme digne de ce beau nom."<sup>42</sup>

The Sunday preceding Christmas the priest earnestly exhorted all the soldiers to receive the Sacraments on that great day of Love Divine. Henri Ghéon, formerly so hesitant, made a firm resolution to receive Holy Communion, to submit completely to all that the Church required of him. All this was decided without any arguments, revolts, or even astonishment at his own determination. He tells us:

Il n'était pas possible en vérité que l'année la plus tendre et la plus belle de ma vie demeurât sans couronnement...Il n'est plus de crainte ni de timidité, plus de prêtre ni de confession qui tiennent; plus d'excuse d'indignité plus d'orgueil, plus de préventions: tous les obstacles sont tombés d'eux-mêmes devant l'effusion irrésistible,

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<sup>42</sup>

Ibid., p. 175.



de l'amour, de la joie, de la reconnaissance...<sup>43</sup>

He made an appointment with the army chaplain and confided to him his "récit lyrique." The priest did not seem in the least elated over his poetic burst of enthusiasm. In fact, his advice sounded cold and dry to the burning heart of Ghéon, yet it was full of the Wisdom of God. "Si je vous comprends," he said, "...vous êtes venu à Dieu en artiste... mon cher enfant, Dieu est raison...ne nous laissons pas égarer par le sentiment!...Il faut croire avec son esprit."<sup>44</sup>

This reception was indeed a cruel shock to our poet's sensibility; nevertheless he insisted upon making his general confession the next day. He prepared for that great act with as scrupulous care as he had done long ago when he was a child. What a score to settle! Twenty years of sin.

La tête dans les mains je parle, je parle...  
je laisse couler d'abondance le flot innombrable  
de mes péchés. En les voyant passer plus aucun  
d'eux ne me parût aimable, digne d'excuse ou de  
compassion. Mais à mesure que je les confesse;  
ils s'en vont, ils me quittent; sitôt avoués,  
aussitôt remis; je sens une lie, épaisse et  
amère, grumeau par grumeau, dégorger mon coeur;  
avec tout ce poids mort, tout ce poison entre ses  
fibres, comment pouvait-il encore battre et  
battre la joie comme la douleur? O délices sans  
nom d'un coeur qui s'ouvre et se renonce; dégout  
de soi où se complaît la conscience--car elle

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

sait qu'il va finir...J'ai tout confié à un homme et Dieu m'entend: Allez en paix!<sup>45</sup>

The following words of Armand Praviel evaluate these lines, "Dans des pages vraiment admirables d'humilité et de franchise, dignes d'être comparées au fameux chapitre d'En Route il a rapporté sa dernière étape vers la religion de son enfance."<sup>46</sup>

Henri Ghéon arose from his knees a new man, born of the war. He returned to his lodging to await the following day, Christmas Eve, when he was to seal his pact with his Creator by the reception of his Sacramental Lord. The chaplain took care to warn him against the delusion of expecting to feel sensible delights upon receiving Holy Communion. Such favors were reserved for great saints. He added that the efficacy of the Sacrament did not depend on the consolation experienced. The advice was timely indeed, for Ghéon tells us: "Quelle torture de se dire: Dieu est descendu dans mon coeur et de n'y sentir que mélancholie! Il faut prier, prier. Dieu est là, mais il dort; tâchons de l'éveiller au chant de nos prières."<sup>47</sup>

During midnight Mass his prayer of faith had its effect.

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>46</sup>Armand Praviel, "Un Primitif de France, M. Henri Ghéon," Correspondant, Vol. 297, (Oct. 25, 1924), p. 184.

<sup>47</sup>Henri Ghéon, L'Homme Né de la Guerre, p. 209.

"Tous mes doutes s'envolent et dans cette joie unanime, ma communion de l'aube reçoit sa consécration...Ainsi Noël moissonne ce qu'avait semé Pâques et mon saint martyr n'est pas mort en vain."<sup>48</sup>

Thus Henri Ghéon returned to the Catholic faith. Whether too much stress is placed upon the influence of Dupouey upon his return, and not enough on the prayers of his relatives, together with the impressions received from the war, is not in question. He himself, in giving the title "L'Homme Né de la Guerre" to the story of his conversion seems to indicate that the sum-total of all the influences he underwent during the war brought about his conversion. However that may be, he has remained these twenty years a faithful son of Holy Mother the Church.

In the following chapters I shall endeavor to indicate what effect his conversion had on his literary works.

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<sup>48</sup>  
Ibid., p. 212.

## Chapter III

## Ghéon's Dramatic Theory

From his earliest years Henri Ghéon showed signs of his vocation as a dramatist. In fact his love for the theater seems to be hereditary. He tells us that his maternal grandfather was ruined because of his love for the opera. His uncle had written several plays in his youth. The theater was a constant topic of conversation in the Vangeon household. In fact Henri, in the quality of author, stage manager and actor gave signs of his future vocation. "J'improvisais sans cesse avec ma soeur et quelques camarades des représentations, auxquelles assistait mon grand-père avec sa pipe, son chien, et son journal."<sup>49</sup> Before his tenth year he had read *Athalie* and *Macbeth*. He delved into the old selections of 19th century drama found in the family library,--not even omitting the classics. As a youth in the Lycée his favorite authors were Virgil, La Fontaine, Lamartine, Verlaine and Viélé-Griffin. In the theater he preferred the Greek authors, Shakespeare, Molière and de Musset.

From the commencement of Henri Ghéon's literary career he manifested his ability as a poet, especially a "poète

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<sup>49</sup>Letter from Henri Ghéon to the author, Nov.1, 1938.

dramatique."<sup>50</sup> He had diligently studied the Greek tragedies, the French classics, the Elizabethans,--in fact, all the masterpieces of drama. He had formed a high and noble idea of what dramatic art should be. To him, the product of the contemporary theater in which realism reigned supreme, was far beneath those great works with which he had nourished his taste and ambition. He contrasted the carelessly prepared dramas of the "théâtre libre," giving their "tranche de vie" to the hungry masses, with the poetic masterpieces which were rethought, recast, put in form, in perfect rhythm, according to the immutable laws of art. The mediocre naturalistic dramas were mere novels enacted, in which no poetry existed. Yet, all the great masters of the theater,--Sophocles, Shakespeare, Racine, Molière--all were poets. The theater, he felt, was in danger of belying its origin. He determined that the one which he would endeavor to rebuild would be the "théâtre poétique." This did not necessarily mean that he would oppose verse to prose. He states:

Il est telle prose de poète infiniment plus poétique que des vers. La forme importe peu pourvu qu'il y ait une forme. La poésie propre au théâtre, c'est avant tout une orientation

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<sup>50</sup> His first attempt at drama was a "tragédie populaire" in "vers libre," Le Pain, written in 1898, but not played until 1911.

vers le style et vers l'harmonie, l'impulsion d'un rythme qui porte en premier lieu les mots, mais par les mots mêmes, les gestes, les lie, les règle, les ordonne, pour composer un monde enchanté, enchanteur, plus évident, plus beau, plus vrai que le vrai monde dont il propose cependant l'image, mais sur un plan supérieur. C'est une architecture en mouvement, une musique visible et intelligible; et voilà pourquoi tous les arts, d'une façon plus ou moins explicite, selon le genre et le sujet, devront lui prêter leur concours.<sup>51</sup>

His "théâtre poétique" would require harmony not only of words but also of action. The gestures, the movements, the costumes,--all must be in perfect agreement, in order to give to the work its true color. These ideas were certainly revolutionary and reactionary, but they did not exactly originate with Ghéon. He simply wanted to reconcile the theater with a lost tradition and thus to restore it to its original status.

In the second place Ghéon's ideal was to form a "théâtre populaire," a "théâtre d'échange." The truths portrayed were to have an appeal to all, and should find an echo in the lives of all. The author, the actors, and the audience being one in their ordinary walk of life, would be one in mind and heart in reference to the scenes enacted. This idea, too, was traditional; for, from its very origin, the theater was a meeting place of an entire people in a common sentiment. Such was the Grecian theater, the Elizabethan

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<sup>51</sup>

Henri Ghéon, "Le Théâtre Poétique," Le Devoir, (vendredi 19 août 1938), p. 2.

theater in England and the medieval theater in France. Gradually, however, the appeal was directed to an elite rather than to a popular audience. Ghéon believed with Jacques Copeau that "il n'y aura de théâtre nouveau qu'au moment où l'homme de la salle pourra murmurer les paroles de l'homme de la scène, en même temps que lui et du même cœur que lui."<sup>52</sup>

Jacques Copeau proved to be the very friend and master Ghéon needed to enable him to put his theory to a test. At the end of the year 1913 Copeau risked his fortune in founding the Vieux Colombier. One did not find here that extravagance and munificence of stage setting favored by Max Reinhardt. Copeau held that such luxury withdrew the attention from the actors and detracted from the soul of the play itself. He maintained in his foundation that simplicity of scenery which was always in perfect harmony with the text of the play.<sup>53</sup> The establishment of this theater was a decisive event for the "théâtre poétique." Ghéon's dream was finally to be realized, for here was offered him "un instrument de poésie et un climat de poésie." Here the young dramatist was initiated into the school of Shakespeare,

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<sup>52</sup>Henri Ghéon, Jeux et Miracles pour le Peuple Fidèle, La Revue des Jeunes, Paris, 1922.

<sup>53</sup>Gaston Baty, Vie de l'Art Théâtral, Plon, Paris, 1932.

Musset and of Molière. From Copeau, a true master of technique, he tells us "Nous apprenions à manier le matière même de notre art, le plateau, les acteurs, à le pétrir dans sa matière même; c'est ainsi qu'il on fait des dramaturges avertis, qui sont quelque chose de plus que des littérateurs en chambre."<sup>54</sup>

The war interrupted for a time the practical application of Ghéon's dramatic theory. But the outcome of his experiences during the war was to mark the complete fulfillment of his hopes for the theater. Following his conversion to the faith, the "théâtre poétique" and "populaire" was to become the "théâtre Chrétien." Upon returning home from war, he brought back in his baggage a poetic theater, become, in spite of itself, Christian.

One is not to conclude, however, that Ghéon's point of view had changed. The following explanation will help to clarify that illusion.

Mon esthétique dramatique n'avait pas changé. On accuse la religion de toutes sortes de méfaits sur le plan littéraire et artistique. A entendre ses détracteurs, et parfois même ses amis, elle exigerait du poète, du romancier, du dramaturge des sacrifices dommageables au plein exercice de l'art. Je ne m'en suis pas aperçu. S'il se trouve encore quelqu'un qui

<sup>54</sup> Henri Ghéon, "Le Théâtre Chrétien et le Théâtre Poétique," Le Devoir, Montreal, (Vendredi, 19, Aout, 1938), p. 2.



en doute parmi mes frères catholiques, je suis heureux de lui apprendre qu'il n'y a pas un art chrétien, un art païen, un art juif, un art communiste, mais un art tout court, aux principes sûrs, qui se met au service du croyant et de l'incroyant, sans distinction aucune; et, selon moi, l'honneur du poète catholique, c'est de l'accepter tel qu'il est, dans son objet, dans sa nature, dans son intransigeance, pour qu'il rende son maximum, Dieu veut un maximum. Lui donnerons-nous moins qu'au diable? Se contentera-t-il de nos sous-produits, de nos déchets? Il n'a que faire d'un art fade, neutre, médiocre, émasculé, rabaisse au niveau des prières pieusardes et des statues de saint en sucre coloré. Une seule prudence nous bridera, celle de conformer le choix de nos sujets à l'âge de nos spectateurs, à leur milieu, à leur connaissance du monde; elle variera selon les temps et les pays. Une fois le sujet choisi, qu'on le traite sans réticence--ou qu'il ne soit plus question d'apostolat par l'art, mais de simple édification.

J'ai eu la joie de retrouver le mien au point où je l'avais laissé, sur de lui-même, prêt à incarner mon âme nouvelle, mes nouveaux soucis, mes nouveaux sujets.<sup>55</sup>

Hereafter, his dramatic theory, founded on the firm rock of Catholicism, could be more definitely stated and more surely realized. Now in full possession of his genius he is ready to begin his real life's work. In the preface to "Jeux et Miracles pour le Peuple Fidèle," M. Ghéon declared his purpose: "la création d'un répertoire 'Chrétien populaire,' commun à tous, ouvert à tous sans distinction ni d'âge, ni de culture, à l'homme de peuple, au lettré,

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

aux petits et aux grands."<sup>56</sup> Now in reality his ideal of a "théâtre populaire" d'échange", could be realized. Heretofore he had tried in vain to select a "terrain de communion", an idea which would appeal to all, a common sentiment which would bring about that communion of the author, the actor, and the audience. What stronger bond could he find than that of the one true faith. His theater was to be the theater for "le peuple fidèle." Of course, such a theater presupposed a Christian people, publicly professing their faith. He felt that France was still Catholic at heart, even though she did not always manifest it. Why not aid the people to surmount human respect and "faire tant que la fille aînée de l'Eglise se manifeste au monde telle qu'elle est."<sup>57</sup>

Ghéon did not disdain using the humble "théâtre de patronage" as the chief instrument in applying his newly formed idea. He realized only too well the mediocre work which these theaters had produced. Yet he saw no reason why this should continue. He, for one, would attempt to raise the standard by putting all the force of his art to the service of his faith.

Tâcher dans la mesure de ses forces (des forces de sa foi, des forces de son art, intégralement employées) de réaccoutumer le siècle au

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<sup>57</sup> Henri Ghéon, Jeux et Miracles pour le Peuple Fidèle, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

"merveilleux Chrétien" comme à une réalité. Travailler à rendre la foi plus concrète, plus familière, et plus intimement mêlée à notre vie de tous les jours. Enfin, de faire rentrer dans la société des hommes, ces hommes d'hier et de jadis, aujourd'hui saints, qui, partageant notre condition, nos tentations, nos faiblesses, gagnèrent le ciel sur la terre et militèrent avant de triompher.<sup>58</sup>

In a word, Ghéon intended to present God's heroes to the world in an artistic and dramatic form. Since they were men with human passions as well as noble and simple virtues, these characters were as suitable for presentation as the heroes of antiquity, or the heroes of the hour. He would portray the saints as human beings to be imitated as well as admired.

Ghéon's keen insight well realized that to make the theater a pulpit by moralizing on every occasion would defeat his purpose. The real artist, however, may moralize without appearing to do so. Ghéon reminded us that Molière and La Fontaine did not destroy the artistic value of their works by moralizing. Hence Ghéon determined: "Si le théâtre fait plutôt les mœurs que les mœurs ne font le théâtre, créons le théâtre des saints."<sup>59</sup>

In the preface to his "Le Comédien et la Grâce" Ghéon

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

enlarged on his dramatic theory. He discussed for the benefit of some of his critics. the place given to "grace" in many of his plays. He called their attention to the employing of Destiny in the great Greek tragedies. The present day public also let themselves be captivated by the depicting of Oriental superstitions. If the "supernatural" influencing the nature of man is accepted under the sign of Mahomet or Buddha, why, he questioned, should one object to "grace" from a dramatic point of view?<sup>60</sup>

He also stated his opinion on the ideas held by modern dramatists of "invention at any cost." One tried to surpass the other by inventing new combinations of sentiments, of fantastic dreams--call it what you may--provided it surprises the audience. Ghéon questioned their objective--to surprise; was that worthy of their art?

These modern dramatists maintained that the production must come entirely from the mind of the author himself. Ghéon reminded them that the greatest writers known: Shakespeare, Dante, Racine,--all drew their subjects from antiquity, from old legends and matter already treated.

Imitating the great masters of the past, Ghéon chose to draw his inspiration from sources seemingly exhausted

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<sup>60</sup> Henri Ghéon, Le Comédien et la Grâce, preface, Plon-Nourrit, Paris, 1925.

long ago. He was surprised to find the rich fields of popular tradition unfurrowed and the fathomless depths of Christian legends practically unexplored. He realized that these subjects were more proper to the "théâtre poétique" than any he had heretofore discovered. The poetry of the theater favored convention: it signified objects, it did not produce them. In the "théâtre Chrétien,"

Il lui est donc permis de signifier...en personnages agissants, les damnés, les élus, les démons, les anges; de signifier les vertus, théologales, cardinales, les Dons du saint Esprit, la Grâce et tous ses instruments; de signifier de miracle; sans user pour cela d'une machinerie compliquée, en restant de plain-pied avec le public. Les Anges ne volent pas; ils marchent: convention; Ils parlent notre langue: convention encore. La Poésie les presse de collaborer à ses jeux: c'est une corde de plus à sa lyre.<sup>61</sup>

By means of this art of convention Henri Ghéon endeavored to re-establish the sense of the 'merveilleux' and the sense of the 'concret' which made the faith of the Middle Ages so practical. Although he himself called his plays "miracles" and "mystères" he did not imply that he imitated the authors of the Medieval dramas. He maintained that, although these dramas were sublime in their intentions, in their aspirations and in their appeal to the people, they

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<sup>61</sup> Henri Ghéon, "Théâtre poétique et théâtre Chrétien," Le Devoir, Montreal, (Vendredi, 19 Août 1938), p. 2.

did not have time to ripen. Their growth had been interrupted by the advent of humanism. He felt it was the duty of the present day Christian author, who had been formed by and could profit by several centuries of masterpieces, to take them up at this point of rupture in order to recast them and incorporate in them his new acquisitions.<sup>62</sup> In other words, his theory was to adapt the matter and the form of the Medieval drama to the modern principles of dramatic art.

A general discussion of Ghéon's practical application of this theory will help to demonstrate how he modernized the Medieval genre. In his "miracles" and "mystères" Ghéon does not try to present a panoramic view of life, but instead develops a particular situation or some specific incident in the life of the saint. There is a marked difference, too, in the length, the form and in the number of characters employed in the plays of the two ages. Ghéon's "miracles" and "mystères" are much shorter and employ fewer characters than the medieval dramas. His are written for the most part in prose rather than in verse. Most of them are divided into acts, some into episodes. Ghéon does not confine his choice of subject matter entirely to the

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<sup>62</sup>Claude Hurtubise, "Un Entretien avec Henri Ghéon," Le Relève, 6<sup>e</sup> Cahier (Oct. 1938), p. 167.

"mystères" and "miracles" of the Middle Ages. He draws his inspiration from the Bible, the Legende Dorée, and especially from the legends and lives of the saints.<sup>63</sup>

La Merveilleuse Histoire du Jeune Bernard de Menthon, drawn from a fifteenth century "mystère" is one of Ghéon's plays that keeps the following characteristics of the old genre: it begins with a prologue and is divided into "journées;" prose is mixed with verse, according to the impressions the author wishes to convey; the scene is multiple, representing four places simultaneously; the character of "Le Fou" is used to give the prologue; it was written to be given out of doors. This "mystère" was shown for the first time August, 1924, on the occasion of the millenary celebrations of St. Bernard. The ancient Chateau de Menthon offered a perfect setting with the mountains of Savoy as a background. Yet, that it can be easily adapted to the modern stage and appreciated by a modern audience is evident from the following fact. The English actor and playwright, Sir Jackson Barry, was present at this first performance. Recognizing the artistic qualities of the play, he translated it and presented it to the English

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<sup>63</sup>Sister M. Constantia Fox, B.V.M., An Abstract of The Thesis The Miracle And The Mystère in France In The Last Decade, 1920-1930, 1931, p. 12, 13.

public both at the Birmingham Repertory Theater and at the Kingsway. The critic testifies that, despite its medieval atmosphere, the English audience accepted its reality. He explains that

Perhaps it really is that the two voices which cry to St. Bernard--that voice from heaven calling him to service against evil, and that other of love and common duties of the world--have not ceased to provide a living issue...we may look upon young Bernard in the anguish of choice in that midnight hour and feel that the devils who urge their presence through the darkness about him, and the Virgin and saints who proffer their guidance from the lighted heavens above, are symbols of something abidingly real in human nature and its dealings with external things.<sup>64</sup>

Hence, there remains no doubt that Ghéon's dramatic theory is capable of restoring the theater to its primitive destiny: a "théâtre poétique," a "théâtre chrétien populaire."

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Horace Shipp, "Conviction and the Drama,"  
English Review, (May, 1926).



## Chapter IV

A Study of Some of Ghéon's Dramas Considered as  
a Manifestation of His Religious Experiences.

To the literary world the happiest outcome of Ghéon's conversion was his realization of the true relation of Art to Morality. We recall that, before his conversion, he was a searcher of Art for Art's sake. It had occupied the place of God in his life, for he had made it the unique, the final end of all his endeavors. After his conversion Ghéon realized that his religion required of him not only the submission of his intellect--Faith, but also the direction of his will to God as his final end--Morals. He learned that man was not free from moral obligation in following the principles of Art any more than in the pursuit of the other professions. Nor did this subordination of Art to Morality make Ghéon less an artist. On the contrary it afforded him an outlet for his hidden aspirations, which, so long suppressed, seemed to have been waiting for this happy release.

In the application of his theory, to which he set about immediately with the ardor of an apostle, Ghéon never lost sight of the main objective of the art of the theater,--to please. Succeeding admirably in this prime purpose, he found no difficulty in realizing the secondary aims,--Art

and edification.<sup>65</sup> His conception of the theater was certainly not a narrow one. It lent itself to a style mixed and varied. Ghéon well knew that the ordinary course of human existence is tragedy mixed with comedy, laughter with tears. Since he wrote according to his natural disposition, one finds laughter predominating in his plays. That "esprit galois," an ancestral trait, permeates most of his works. However, the artistic tastes of our author prevented his abusing the comic element. His mirth is always cultured and refined.

It was with "La Farce Du Pendu Dépendu," a miracle play in three acts, that Ghéon made his debut in the "théâtre chrétien." It was shown May 25, 1920 at the Théâtre Balzac. The theme, taken from the Legende Dorée, shows how, for the man of faith, God draws good out of evil. The action is centered around a poor German peasant and his son, a simpleton, who, on their way to the shrine of St. James, are falsely accused of theft.

#### Characters

Escamillo, the innkeeper

Carmen, his wife

Mathias Schultz, the old German peasant

Peter Schultz, his son

<sup>65</sup>

Sister M. Constantia Fox, B.V.M., An Abstract of The Thesis The Miracle And The Mystère in France in The Last Decade 1920-1930, 1931, p. 5.

The Judge

The Policeman

Act I

The Arrival of the Pilgrims.

The scene is laid in an isolated inn situated on the road to the shrine of St. James the Apostle. The innkeeper and his wife are lamenting the present state of affairs: no more miracles, no pilgrims, no money. Both are surprised at the arrival of two pilgrims, an old man and his son. Carmen's curiosity is aroused by the father's repeated warnings to his son, "Garde bien ton sac, mon garçon." After the boy has fallen asleep, Carmen and her husband induce the father to take one drink too many. He falls into a deep slumber. Carmen then searches the sack. She finds a bag of gold and avidly counts it over and over. She presents a problem that must be solved: "Comment, sans voler cet argent--pouvons-nous obtenir qu'il passe de ce sac dans notre caisse?"<sup>66</sup> Just then someone knocks violently at the door. Carmen hastily restores the money and opens the door. A policeman and a judge are seeking lodging for the night. A story told by the judge as to how he handles cases of theft gives Carmen a clue to the solving of her

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<sup>66</sup>La Farce Du Pendu Dépendu, I, 2, p. 22.

problem. She begins by putting her most valuable possession, her silver wedding cup into the pilgrim's sack, and, conveniently rationalizing her act, she explains to her husband, "Ils l'ont prise. Nous ne sommes pas des voleurs, nous sommes des volés. Dormons en paix."<sup>67</sup>

## Act II

The Accusation and Sentence Passed.

Scene: Same as act I. Time: next morning.

Carmen, without directly accusing anyone, reports to the policeman and the judge the theft of her silver wedding cup. The pilgrims are questioned and the sack searched. The cup is found therein. The father and son are arrested and brought before the judge. They are accused and convicted of having stolen the cup and according to custom they must forfeit all their goods--all that is in the sack to the innkeeper and his wife and then be hanged on the nearest tree. Carmen, beginning to be remorseful, insists that one be let live so that he can pray for the other. It is agreed that the son be hanged. The father continues on his way to the shrine of St. James.

## Act III

Le Pendu Dépendu

Scene: in front of the same inn

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<sup>67</sup>

Ibid., I, 4, p. 30.

Time: three weeks later

Carmen and her husband summon up enough courage to go out of doors. It is the first time in three weeks for, facing their inn door the body of the boy still hangs. The innkeeper puts on an air of bravado, but Carmen is tormented by remorse. She suggests that they both go to confession. However, it would mean that they would have to make full reparation: give up the sack of money, and even be hanged. Dame Carmen thinks of another means. Knowing she will never have enough courage to confess her crime, she writes the whole affair on a piece of paper. She suggests going to the shrine of St. James, offering a candle in his honor and then burning the paper in the flame. "le bon Saint Jacques daignerait lire notre message...et prendrait bien la confidence. De là à nous pardonner il n'y a qu'un pas. Tu sais que le don d'un cierge ne manque jamais de flatter un saint!"<sup>68</sup> At that moment the policeman and the judge stop in for a drink. They compliment the couple on their beautiful "pendu." They claim to have hanged many a person, but never had one lasted as long as this one.

No sooner do they enter the inn than the poor father of the "pendu" returns from the shrine. He prays and weeps

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., III, 1, p. 83.

at the foot of the tree from which his son hangs. To his surprise the boy talks to him, telling him that he is alive and well, thanks to St. James to whom he recommended himself in his last hour. When the father insists on loosening the cord the boy says that he must remain there until after a new judgment has been pronounced.

The policeman, the judge, Carmen and the innkeeper come to view the "pendu." Then, amid thunder and darkness the boy tells them that they have condemned an innocent person. The judge, although confounded, asks for one more proof. The "pendu" tells him to read the paper which he will find in Carmen's pocket. Her written confession reveals the whole truth. The judge then reverses the sentence, giving the inn, the sack and even the silver cup to the old man and his son, and condemning Carmen or her husband to be hanged. However, the boy bargains with the policeman, gives him the inn in exchange for the freedom of the culprits. He and his father drink to the health of all before returning home. "Nous allons arroser ensemble la résurrection merveilleuse de ce jeune homme que vous avez si mal pendu."<sup>69</sup>

The precision with which Ghéon delineates each of his

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., III, 4, p. 111.

characters is a clear indication of his inherent powers as a dramatist. Dame Carmen, from the beginning until the end of the play is true to her character; a vain, imaginative woman, coveting money insofar as it can procure for her fine clothes and an easy life.

Her husband, Escamillo, rather an easy-going, spineless individual is occasionally ambitious enough to raise some objections to his wife's misdeeds. He never initiates any plan, but in the final outcome follows Carmen's suggestions. At the end, he cries out in despair, "Monsieur le Juge... c'est elle qui m'a débauché."<sup>70</sup>

In contrast with these two worldly-wise individuals are the simple-hearted old peasant and his son. The old father's implicit faith in God, although seemingly poorly rewarded, is not shaken. It proved to be just as firm in time of trouble as in prosperity, for he continued on his way to the shrine of St. James after he had been robbed of all, even of his son. Withal, he is very human, gladly responding to the invitation to drink to the health of the innkeeper. Neither is he very anxious to leave this world nor to forfeit his sack of gold, but prefers to have his son hanged in his stead.

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., III, 4, p. 104.

The son, with all his simplicity, actually has more common sense than the rest of the characters. When the innkeeper greedily takes the forfeited sack of gold, saying "Il pèse," the boy prophetically responds, "Il vous pesera plus qu'à moi." While he is waiting to be hanged he asks Carmen to say the rosary with him. "Je vais égrener un petit rosaire pour mes parents, pour mes amis et pour mes ennemis."<sup>71</sup> When Carmen loses the control of overwrought nerves and goes into hysterics, the boy knowingly says, "Dans mon pays, quand une femme pleure de la sorte, on dit que c'est le diable qui passe." The remarkable wisdom he shows when hanging from the tree is somewhat symbolical. It signifies how far greater than worldly wisdom is the wisdom of the children of God. The "gendarme" and the judge offer us a fair portrait of the typical character in these professions. The self-satisfaction of the judge is evident when he says: "Gendarme, quoi que vous puissiez dire, je suis content de moi: Salomon n'aurait pas mieux fait."<sup>72</sup>

The "gendarme" accepting a bribe from the boy is certainly true to the universal type:

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., II, 3, p. 62.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., II, 3, p. 63.



Le Fils:..."Combien pour ne pas pendre l'aubergiste?

Le Gendarme: "Pour qui me prenez-vous?"

Le Fils: "Dites combien?"

Le Gendarme: "On risque trop, Monsieur...Il faudrait une grosse somme." And, accepting the inn as sufficient reimbursement, he says to the culprits, "Filez ensemble! vous êtes libres...Changez de nom et qu'on ne vous revoie plus!"<sup>73</sup>

In the preface of this play the author tells us that he took the opportunity to write a miracle play which would be at the same time a farce. "...tenter de rejoindre, à travers Molière et ses successeurs, la vieille tradition de notre moyen âge, qui savait si bien marier la malice à la foi."<sup>74</sup> This attempt met with an unforeseen success and continued for some time to enjoy an immense popularity. It was played at Geneva in the Théâtre de la Comédie, in Touraine in Brittany, and in many other cities throughout France.

Why was it that this simple "Farce" was greeted so wholeheartedly and was instrumental in paving the way for the future works of Ghéon? There had been, not only in

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., II, 3, p. 65.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., III, 5, pp. 108-109.

France but also in other countries a general discontent with the productions of the contemporary theater and a definite desire for something on a higher level. And, in spite of current opinion, the public welcomes religious drama when it is refreshing, beautiful, artistic and exalted. I do not pretend to imply that all of these qualities can be applied to "La Farce." It was, however, the artistic quality of the author's work that attracted the attention of the theater-going public to Henri Ghéon. In that play they found a full measure of humor and wit combined with simplicity and directness of tone. Here too, he depicts to us a strong contrast between the foibles of shrewd human nature and the beautiful simplicity of faith.

"La Farce" derives its merit from the simple fact that it revived and thus continued the comic traditions that are a vital part of French literature, and it does so with that freshness of style and that harmony of motion which merits for Ghéon the title of "poète dramatique" even when he writes in prose.

The following play, the Aventures de Gilles ou Le Saint Malgre Lui, is more representative of Ghéon's "théâtre chrétien" than is La Farce. It is the principal play in his first series of "Jeux et Miracles pour le Peuple Fidèle."

This play is a "miracle populaire" in four episodes, written in prose. It was shown for the first time March 23, 1922, by the students of l'Ecole Saint-Apais in Melun.

The theme of this "miracle" is the struggle of a saint to hide his sanctity. It shows that one should not try to "hide his candle under a bushel" but let its light shine before men that they may profit by it and thus God may be glorified. The subject, taken from the life of St. Gilles whose feast is celebrated September 1, conforms in substance to the account in the breviary.

#### Characters

##### Episode I

Gilles, a young patrician of Athens, about thirteen years

Théodore, his father and Pélagie, his mother

Gaspard, a poor boy, friend of Gilles, about thirteen years, a paralytic

A mother and her child

A possessed woman

Citizens of Athens

##### Episode II

Gilles and Gaspard

The Captain of the ship, his two mates Nicomède and Polycarpe

Several passengers

### Episode III

Gilles and Gaspard

Bishop Césaire of Arles

Dame Magloire, his housekeeper

An old shepherd and his blind daughter

### Episode IV

Gilles, fifteen years later

A doe, his companion

King Childebert

Gaspard, his chief hunter

Théodore and Pélagie

Several huntsmen

### Episode I

#### The Beginning of Gilles' Miracles

Scene: A street in Athens. Gilles and Gaspard are discussing their likes and ambitions. Gaspard loves to travel and thus learn without studying. Gilles on the contrary says, "Moi, je n'aime pas l'aventure et je compte rester toujours dans ma ville et dans ma maison."<sup>76</sup> Gaspard confides to his friend that he is departing that very night on the boat Calypso on which he will serve as "mousse." On their way home they notice a poor beggar lying against the wall. They discover that he has been paralyzed for fifteen years as the

<sup>76</sup>

Henri Ghéon, Jeux et Miracles Pour le Peuple Fidèle,  
Revue Des Jeunes, Paris, 1922, p. 139.

result of an accident. "Le choc a dû casser tout net les deux ficelles qui font marcher les jambes."<sup>77</sup> Out of pity for him, Gilles gives the beggar his coat. Immediately the paralytic is cured. "Est-ce que vous auriez raccommo   mes deux ficelles? Est-ce que je serais gu  ri?...Mes jambes! Je les fais aller de droite    gauche...Elles bougent...elles plient...elles me portent! Je marche!"<sup>78</sup>

Gilles, embarrassed and frightened, runs away, in spite of the objections of Gaspard who is lost in admiration at his friend's extraordinary power. At the report of the miracle a crowd soon gathers and joins in the pursuit of Gilles.

Gilles and Gaspard succeed in eluding the crowd, and hide in the corner against the wall. Just then a mother enters carrying her child who had been bitten by a serpent. She is begging for help. Gilles, urged by Gaspard, cures the child. Again the cry "Un miracle" is raised and Gilles tries to escape. He is finally surrounded by the crowd, in which we now find his parents, Th  odore and P  lagie. They are amazed to recognize their own son as the wonder-worker. Just as the crowd begins to disperse a possessed woman enters. Gilles delivers her from the demon. The crowd,

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<sup>77</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

Ibid., p. 155.

overcome with admiration carries the young boy in triumph to his home. The entire city prepares for a festival to be held that evening in his honor.

## Episode II

### Gilles Calms the Tempest.

Scene: On the sea, on board the Calypso.

The gruff old captain and the mates "check up" to see that all is in readiness for the voyage. Gaspard is on the deck, already engaged in the humble occupation of the "mousse": scrubbing. He hears someone calling him. To his surprise and joy he recognizes Gilles who asks for help to climb on board. Gaspard protests because they are going to set sail in five minutes. Gilles insists:--"Je ne veux pas rester dans un pays où il se passe des choses si extraordinaires et peut-être bien tout ordinaires dans le fond-- et qu'on en fait grand cas et qu'on me les met toutes sur le dos!"<sup>79</sup> He persuades Gaspard to hide him. Shortly after they set sail, a storm arises and all hope of saving the vessel seems in vain. The hard old captain has enough religion in him to command all to pray. But matters become worse, until Gilles is discovered praying alone in a corner; for, he confides to Gaspard, he is afraid that God will work

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

a miracle and again he will be blamed for it. The captain insists that he pray aloud. No sooner does he do so than the storm ceases. All on board proclaim Gilles a saint and praise him. He suggests that they thank God. While all are prostrate in prayer, Gilles makes the sign of the cross and jumps overboard and disappears. Gaspard follows him.

### Episode III

Gilles Assists Bishop Césaire.

Scene: At Arles, in the home of Bishop Césaire.

Bishop Césaire is going to visit his poor in company with a young man named Jérôme. We easily recognize him to be Gilles. The bishop is being reprimanded by his housekeeper, Dame Magloire, for harboring the two shipwrecked beggars, Jérôme and Gaspard, and for favoring Jérôme--always taking him for his companion, instead of the other more worthy clerics.

After the bishop and Jérôme depart a dispute arises between Dame Magloire and Gaspard, who has the privilege of being her kitchen helper. She boasts of all the miracles that her saintly bishop is performing. This is too much for Gaspard. He can keep the secret no longer. He claims all the credit for his friend Jérôme, and reveals to Dame Magloire his identity: Gilles of Athens. Dame Magloire, scandalized by the claims of Gaspard and resentful that the

honor should be taken from her saintly bishop, denounces Gaspard to the bishop. To her surprise the bishop acknowledges the sanctity of the youth. Gilles sadly reproaches Gaspard for betraying him and tells him that he must leave, and this time, alone. But to console his friend he confides to him the secret of his life:

Gaspard, je suis un malheureux et voila d'où vient mon malheur. Un jour que je priais devant la croix, le coeur de Jesus s'est ouvert et, dans une grande lumière, j'ai vu sa gloire, sa bonté, sa douceur...et tout le mal que nous lui avons fait, tous les affronts, toutes les hontes qu'il a soufferts pour nous...Helas! j'ai comparé mon coeur au sien, mon bonheur au sien, ma vie à la sienne. C'est depuis ce jour-là que je suis honteux de moi,--Et voilà que les hommes me font un succes: !<sup>80</sup>

As he is leaving a shepherd humbly knocks at the door and presents his case. His daughter is blind. He had been waiting an hour in the hot sun for the bishop. Again Gaspard comes forward. His friend, he says, might be willing to do something for the poor girl. Gilles protests, but Gaspard begs for one more miracle, the last, perhaps he will ever see performed. Gilles yields, and, making the sign of the cross on each eye, restores the girl's sight.

#### Episode IV

Gilles, the Hermit.

Scene: Forest of St. Gilles, a rocky grotto, covered with vines.

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 297.



Gilles is seated on a stool in front of his grotto. Beside him is a doe, eating the foliage. Gilles begs the doe to give him some friendly advice. The doe insists that fifteen years spent in solitude is sufficient. During these years he has performed untold penances, and, at the same time has refused to accept the very penance God expects from him. She puts this question to Gilles: "Répondez-moi franchement, pauvre petit moine! Qu'est-ce qui vous est le plus désagréable au monde, de souffrir, de saigner, de manger du pain dur et de vous asseoir sur des pointes... --ou qu'on vous rende des honneurs?"<sup>81</sup> She leaves him that he may meditate on the advice given. A hunter's song is heard in the distance. The king's hunting party enters. It consists of King Childebert, his chief hunter, Gaspard, Théodore and Pélagie, and several huntsmen. Upon spying the doe in the thicket, the king prepares to draw his bow, but the doe takes refuge in the grotto. The hunting party discovers Gilles. The doe talks to them, reveals Gilles' identity, and foretells that the king will build a monastery on that very spot. Addressing Gilles she says, "les gens viendront vous y voir, les sourds, les muets, les possèdes,

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Ibid., p. 313.

les aveugles, les fous, les paralytiques..."<sup>82</sup>

The last word in the play is left to Gaspard. "...que chacun se tienne à sa place...selon la vocation de chacun ...C'est aux Saints à donner l'exemple...Mais d'une façon ou d'une autre, que Dieu soit le premier servi."<sup>83</sup>

Again it is in his characterization that Henri Ghéon manifests his dramatic ability. From the free and natural dialogue which his characters employ one is made to feel that they are real living personalities.

The compassionate nature of Gilles is revealed by the words he utters whenever human misery is brought to his notice. In the beginning of the play when they come upon the paralyzed beggar Gaspard insists "Nous ne savons pas réparer les jambes." Gilles, however, answers him, "Attends un peu. Vois-tu, je n'ai ici ni pain, ni vin, ni même une petite pièce...--et toi non plus, bien sûr! On ne peut pourtant pas s'en aller comme ça, Gaspard. Si je lui donnais mon manteau?"<sup>84</sup>

Again, in the second episode when Gaspard insists that Gilles' confidence in God is the source of his miraculous power, the latter objects,

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<sup>82</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

Ibid., pp. 151-152.

Ce n'est pas ma faute, Gaspard. Tu vas comprendre...J'ai tellement songé depuis ce matin, sur le malheur des pauvres gens, à la suite de ma prière, que quand je vois du malheur devant moi, Gaspard, je sens je ne sais quoi à présent qui me passe à travers les membres, que le bon Dieu, sans doute, y fait passer et qui descend sur eux comme une bénédiction. Oui, à ce moment on dirait que mon coeur se vide...et il se trouve que les gens sont guéris. C'est sans doute une maladie. Mais je n'y suis pour rien; je sais ce que je veux--et je ne veux pas qu'on dise que je suis ce que je ne suis pas.<sup>85</sup>

These words are a true expression of the boy's characteristic virtues, humility and sincerity. In them, too, we find the motive for his strange action: leaving his parents and his country.

In Gaspard we recognize the staunch friend, always eager to praise Gilles, yet willing to compromise and help him keep his sanctity hidden.

Dame Magloire is so true to the typical, over-solicitous priest's housekeeper, that I am led to believe that Ghéon observed and overheard the chattering of some worthy dame in that capacity and incorporated her bodily into this play. After a lengthy criticism of Bishop Césaire's methods, she says, "Je ne dis rien, Monseigneur est maître. Et une bonne est une bonne. Et elle se tient à sa place. Sans quoi on l'y remettrait promptement. Je ne dis rien." The

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

audience agrees with the Bishop when he answers her, "Que serait-ce, Dame Magloire, si vous vous permettiez de dire quelque chose?"<sup>86</sup>

Even when Ghéon's characters are allegorical, like Gilles's friend the doe, the dialogue is human and natural. One accepts as a matter of course the doe conversing familiarly with Gilles, giving him counsels of common sense.

In this play Ghéon succeeded in applying his dramatic theory of founding a "théâtre populaire et chrétien." The simplicity and directness of tone found therein could not fail to appeal to the people; hence it was "populaire." It was written in the spirit of faith; hence it was "chrétien." However the last episode does not conform to some of the fundamental principles of art. It is not at all logical, but seems only a result of chance and quite artificial, to find Gilles's father and mother, residents of Athens, in the hunting part of the king of France; and certainly Gaspard as the chief hunter is improbable. Nevertheless, careful handling enables Ghéon to make the entire situation acceptable, and gives him an opportunity of climaxing the comic element which is one of the outstanding characteristics of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

the play. The outcome of the drama, too, atones for the violence to truth. The fact that Gilles is finally willing to put his gifts to the service of others gives the audience a complete sense of satisfaction.

In 1923 Ghéon published his second series of Jeux et Miracles pour le Peuple Fidèle, in response to a popular demand,--so great was the success of his first series. The principal play in this second series is La Bergère au Pays des Loups. This play, more than any heretofore analyzed, characterizes the author as a modern medievalist. Here he employs the "Meneur du Jeu"; he depicts five miracles; he uses the allegorical character of the wolf to represent the devil; he makes use of very conventional angels;--all of which tend to arouse in the hearts of his audience that spirit of faith in the supernatural which was so typical of medieval times.

La Bergère au Pays des Loups is a sacred pastoral with a prologue, three acts and an epilogue. The theme is based on the life of St. Germaine of Pibrac. This play was shown for the first time at the Cercle du Luxembourg in May 1923, by the former students of St. Leonards.

As an introduction to the play, the "Meneur du Jeu" summarizes the life of St. Germaine. He indicates the four major miracles worked in her favor: her flock was miraculously protected while she left them to hear Mass; she

walked on the waters of the river which she had to cross on her way to Mass; her charity to the poor was rewarded by the miracle of the roses as was formerly that of St. Elizabeth of Hungary; at her death angels came to guide her soul to God.

### Prologue

Scene: the home of Germaine

Time: about the year of 1580, Germaine's baptismal day

Marie Laroche, mother of little Germaine, is dying. Four angels come to her with gifts for her child,--humility, poverty, suffering, and last of all, love, "qui---transmute les cailloux en pierreries:...L'amour de Dieu et du prochain qui est la clé de la vie éternelle."<sup>87</sup> The Mother accepts them for her child.

### Act I

#### The First Two Miracles

Scene: a field at the edge of the forest

Time: between the years 1595-1600,--early morning

Germaine is watching her flock of sheep. Her little friend, Jeannot, comes to visit and to console her. From

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<sup>87</sup> Henri Ghéon, La Bergère Au Pays Des Loups,  
Revue Des Jeunes, Paris, 1923, p. 63.

their conversation it is evident that she possesses in their fulness the four gifts brought by the angels,--suffering:

Germaine: Laisse, laisse, Jeannot, Il n'est pas mauvais que je pleure. Les pleurs, ça n'est jamais perdu.

Jeannot: Oû donc que ça va?

Germaine: Là où les coeurs sont trop durs, je suppose. C'est comme la pluie sur la terre, cela permet de labourer et de semer.

--humility:

Jeannot: Mais elle t'a fait coucher à la porte? sur une bourrée?

Germaine: Je dors bien près de mes moutons.

--poverty:

Jeannot: O pauvre corps! C'est-y pas malheureux qu'il faille que ce soient tes bêtes qui te réchauffent? Je parierais que tu n'as pas soupe hier au soir?

Germaine: J'ai mon sac du pain et du fromage.

--charity:

Jeannot: Ah!...Alors tu l'aimes? dis-nous donc que tu l'aimes?

Germaine: Je devrais l'aimer...Elle tient la place de ma mère...Je l'ai offensée sans savoir...Elle a du tracass.--Je ne l'aime pas assez, bien sûr.<sup>88</sup>

Their discourse is interrupted by the sound of church bells, and Germaine tells Jeannot that she must go to hear

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-75.

Mass. He tries to dissuade her by reminding her that she will not be able to cross the river, and besides, she cannot leave her sheep.

Jeannot: Et si le loup vient?

Germaine: Il viendra. Tu feras un signe de croix et puis, tu le prieras bien poliment de s'en aller.<sup>89</sup>

Jeannot watches her hasten away, sees her step into the torrent, at the sight of which he buries his face in his hands. When he raises his eyes he sees the wolf. Jeannot makes the sign of the cross, but the wolf insists that the boy keep his hands still. He asks for one of the sheep, but not Germaine's. If he eats hers, he says, he will burst asunder. Jeannot indicates his own flock, but the wolf does not believe him. In his embarrassment he decides to eat Jeannot instead. Again the little shepherd wards him off with the sign of the cross and even dares the wolf to eat him, since he, too, belongs to Germaine. "Je suis son chevalier servant. Je lui appartiens, elle ordonne et je suis avec elle aussi docile que sont ses brébis...Tout ce qui tient à ma bergère est du poison pour vous. Croquez-moi! croquez-moi!"<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 98.



At these words the wolf hastens away. Germaine returns from Mass and in gratitude to the little shepherd, tells him the story of her "Prince Jesus."

## Act II

The Report of the Miracles Reaches Home.

Scene: the home of Germaine's father

Time: the same evening

A few of the neighbors come to visit Laurent Cousin to tell him the marvels they have heard about Germaine. The news of the miracles has spread throughout the entire country. They reproach him for not protecting his daughter from the cruelty of her stepmother. But he tells them that he is powerless in face of her anger, "...il suffit qu'elle élève la voix...je suis mort."<sup>91</sup> He begs them, for Germaine's sake not to mention the miracles to his wife.

Germaine returns home later than usual. Dame Cousin flies into a rage because of Germaine's leaving her sheep and running off to Mass. She is told to go to bed without any supper. Upon going out to the stable to count the sheep, Dame Cousin finds an old beggar there. When she discovers that it was Germaine who had given him shelter, she angrily throws him out of doors.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

## Act III

## The Miracle of the Roses.

Scene: same as first act

Time: the following morning

Germaine and Jeannot are again guarding their sheep. Jeannot is trying his best to cheer his "princesse." He says, "Il ne faut pas songer toujours à ses malheurs." She explains to him, "Je ne me plains pas, petit berger...Ce n'est pas à moi que je songe. Je songe au dur hiver, à la terre qui est scellée, au petit oiseau qui sautille et qui n'y trouve plus un grain...au pauvre homme qui est parti avec sa besace vide et qui n'a pas eu à manger chez nous."<sup>92</sup> She then insists on going into the woods to look for the poor beggar. Jeannot follows her, playing his flute.

"La marche à la crèche, c'est ça,--Allons, Jeannot... Allons chercher le pauvre Jesus dans le bois...Il est faible, il est nu...Tu sais que la Noël approche."<sup>93</sup>

No sooner are they out of sight than Dame Cousin and a few companions come out from the bushes behind which they had been spying on Germaine. They decide to wait there for her return, but they hear voices of men in the distance. The women hide again. The party of men consists of Laurent

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

Cousin, le vieux Rousseau, and some hunters. They are looking for Dame Cousin in order to prevent any violence that she may show to Germaine. They, too hide while awaiting her.

Shortly after, the beggar comes to the same spot, tired and hungry. He sits on Germaine's "pierre," warms himself in her fire, and falls asleep praying that she may come.

Germaine and Jeannot return from their fruitless search in the woods, and to their surprise find the beggar there sleeping. They decide to awaken him gently with a tune from Jeannot's flute. Just as Germaine is about to offer him the crusts that she had gathered from the leavings of the supper, Dame Cousin rushes out and commands her to open her apron. The party of men with Laurent Cousin also come out from their hiding, all urging the father to protest his daughter. He tells Germaine to obey her mother.

Germaine says, "J'obéirai, mon père, puisque vous me le demandez. Mais la part du pauvre est sacrée,--Je vous le dis pour votre bien, ma mère. Malheur à qui y portera la main!"<sup>94</sup> She opens her apron and, to the astonishment of all, it was filled with bright and fragrant flowers. All kneel around Germaine, except Dame Cousin. After giving a flower

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

to all, Germaine offers one to her stepmother, saying, "Dieu vous envoie le signe du pardon."<sup>95</sup> Dame Cousin falls on her knees and promises to repair all the injuries she has done the saintly girl. It is noon and they all say the Angelus together.

### Epilogue

Scene: in front of the home of Germaine

Time: summer of 1601, night

The "vieux" Rousseau and Jeannot are seated on the bench outside the stable where Germaine lies very ill. Jeannot is thoughtful. He asks the old man to tell him again the story of the four angels who brought the mystical gifts to Germaine. Suddenly the little shepherd boy hears music. He sees four angels pass them and enter the stable. He hears them telling Germaine that they have brought her a fifth gift, that of "glory." He then sees the four angels coming out of the stable accompanied by a fifth person, whom he recognizes to be Germaine. He alone has seen them, so he explains to Rousseau that the angels have taken his "princesse." The play closes with the words of the old man, "Allons prier, garçon, et demandons à Dieu qu'il nous envoie aussi ses Anges."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

Ghéon succeeds admirably in the portrayal of each of the characters in this drama. Dame Cousin is typical of the conventional stepmother. The solicitude she has for her own offsprings is in striking contrast with the cruel neglect she shows her stepchild. The iron hand with which she rules her husband and Germaine as well as the reproaches she pours on his first wife leave no doubt but that her master passion is jealousy. Even her neighbors are awed into silence by her outbursts of rage. Laurent Cousin is just the type one would expect to be the husband of Dame Cousin. He is timidity itself. He dare not put in a word of defense for Germaine. Yet, he loves her and suffers with her. With all his weakness he is a man of faith. He is not surprised to hear of all the miracles worked in her favor. "Je me doutais que le bon Dieu était pour elle. Quand on a le malheur sur terre d'avoir un père qui se sait pas l'être, il faut bien que l'autre s'en mêle, le père à tous, le père de là-haut."<sup>97</sup>

One can not but love the simple little shepherd, Jeannot, who is so devoted to his "princesse," Germaine. He would gladly revenge all the wrong done her, were he able. With his sunny, optimistic disposition he helps Germaine to

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

bear her sufferings. He counsels her, "Mais lève donc la tête! C'est le ciel qu'il faut regarder."<sup>98</sup> Characteristic of the poor, he is willing to share the little that he has with Germaine. "Vous voilà pale comme l'hostie et vous ne tenez plus debout...C'est à votre tour de manger...Mange donc sur mon pain, alors."<sup>99</sup>

The character of the wolf fits admirably into the author's plan of accustoming his audience to the "merveilleux chrétien." One has no difficulty in recognizing the devil himself with his weak arguments, his suspicions and his lies. As clever as the wolf thinks himself to be, he is caught in his own trap, and his intelligence is surpassed by the naive logic of the boy.

Le loup: Pourquoi riez?

Jeannot: Parce que vous avez dit une grosse bêtise.

Le loup: Laquelle s'il vous plaît, Monsieur?

Jeannot: ...(Imitating the wolf) "Si vous me trompez, je vous mange." --"Mais, non, mais non, Monsieur le loup, Si je vous trompe, vous crevez, c'est tout. Et une fois crevé, vous aurez du mal à me mordre."--100

And, characteristic of the devil, he will not believe Jeannot, thinking he is a liar, like himself.

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-141.  
<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

It is in depicting the character of Germaine that Ghéon shows himself to be the real artist. The exquisite beauty of her soul is evident in her every word and action. Yet, that does not make her less human. There is so much of reality in Germaine's life that one can not but have as deep an understanding and sympathy for her as one would have for an unfortunate friend. Then, too, the touching familiarity with which she speaks of heavenly things establishes in the mind of the reader or spectator a like feeling of nearness to the supernatural. Hence the miracles worked in her favor do not seem at all improbable.

One must not be led to think that the spiritual tenor of this drama makes it resemble a boring sermon. Not for an instant does Ghéon lose sight of his main objective,--to please. The quaint, picturesque figure of little Jeannot adds to the amusement as well as the beauty of this pastoral. The joyous music from his flute, seemingly coming from the Middle Ages, finds an echo in the heart of the modern spectator. Jeannot wants everyone to be happy with him, to praise God for His sunshine, to live in a world of dreams. His blithesome, carefree spirit offers a balanced contrast with Germaine's exquisitely sweet but sad one. The effect is an artistic and therefore a pleasing one.

Le Comédien et la Grâce was published May 1925, four

years after Ghéon's debut in the "théâtre chrétien." It was dedicated to and inspired by his own troop of actors, Les Compagnons de Notre Dame. In the preface of this work he tells us how it came into being. He was discussing with his friend, Jean-Pierre Altermann, the marvelous conversions and immeasurable benefits effected in his own actors through their work in the theater.

Tous les jours nous voyons de jeunes âmes  
s'ouvrir en assumant devant les spectateurs  
l'âme de sainte Germaine, de saint Gilles...  
Ils sont pour l'abandon du personnage, quand  
celui-ci du moins les dépasse en vertu, en  
héroïsme et en amour de Dieu.<sup>101</sup>

His friend thereupon suggested St. Genest as another subject for his theater. Hence, its origin was, as Ghéon said, a fact of experience.

The conversion of St. Genest had already been treated by Rotrou, but, as Ghéon indicated, he did not develop the real theme of the play: the actor's conversion. According to Ghéon's dramatic theory it was permissible for the dramatist to take up a piece already worked upon and try to make it more acceptable. Hence, he recomposed in three acts the story of the conversion of Genest. This play has never been shown in Paris, but it enjoyed an immense success in Holland,

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<sup>101</sup>Henri Ghéon, Le Comédien Et La Grâce,  
Plon-Nourrit and Co., Paris, 1925, preface, p. 20.



and in England.<sup>102</sup>

Those who accuse Ghéon of not being able to vary his themes, or who complain that his characters are all similar need only to examine this subject and study its masterly development to be convinced of the fallacy of their judgment.

### Characters

Genès, comedian and director of the troop and of the dramatic school of Nicomédia

Poppée, comedian, favorite of Dioclétien

Albine, comedian debutante

Hermès, Julie, Triphon, comedians

Polydore, dramatic author

Dioclétien, emperor, residing at Nicomédia

Rufin

Bélisaire, court marshal

Félix, brother of Genest, christian

Aspar, young negro, slave of Poppée

The white slave of Genest

The promptor

Two heralds

The choir women

The people

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<sup>102</sup>Letter from Ghéon to the author of this thesis, Nov. 1938.

Comedians and students

The court and emperor's guards

The scene is at Nicomédia under the reign of Dioclétien.

## Act I

### The Emperor Makes a Request.

Genest is directing his troop of actors with the skill and technique of a master. He is taking particular pains in training his young student, Albine, in the art of incorporating the character she represents. His attentions to her arouse the jealousy of Poppée, whose tender sentiments towards her master are only too evident. The work of Genest is interrupted by a visit from Dioclétien, who has come expressly to command the actor to give some new form of entertainment. He is tired of subjects drawn from mythology. He requests Genest to enact the martyrdom of Adrian, a Christian whom he had executed three years ago. Polydor, his dramatist, is willing to arrange the play, but Genest raises grave objections. He tells the emperor that he is capable of portraying any human passion, whether it be anger, despair or love; for "C'est l'étoffe commune et bigarrée ou furent taillés tous les hommes."<sup>103</sup> But to enact the part of a Christian "d'épouser des sentiments qui insulte à la

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<sup>103</sup>Henri Ghéon, Le Comédien Et La Grâce,  
Plon-Nourrit and Co., Paris, 1925, p. 55.

nature, à la raison et à l'amour,"<sup>104</sup> this was more than repugnant to him; it was impossible. But the emperor insists. Then Genest brings forth another reason, a personal one, His own brother had become one of the hated sect. This objection had no more weight with the emperor than the first. He makes his final appeal in the name of their friendship "...c'est donc un sacrifice qu'exige de toi ton empereur. Fais-le dans l'amertume, si tu ne peux le faire dans la joie, comme on dit que font les chrétiens. Voilà déjà un point de gagné; sacrifice. Exploite-moi ce sentiment, ami."<sup>105</sup> Genest finally consents.

### Act III

#### Genest Masters His Rôle.

Genest puts all his energies into the study of his new rôle: that of a Christian martyr. He confides to Rufin that he is making progress therein. "Je m'use jusqu'à l'os; il change toutes mes nuits en veilles...et chaque jour il remporte sur moi une sorte de petite victoire."<sup>106</sup> Yet, he is not satisfied. He must know the reason for Christian renunciation. In spite of his repugnance and pride, he sends for his brother Felix. The hopes of the poor, ematiated brother are blighted when he learns that Genest wants help from him only because of professional reasons.

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

Yet, trusting that the seed might fall on fertile ground he explains to Genest the mystery of the love of God for man. In spite of himself Genest is impressed, and eagerly questions, "Comment expliques-tu que certains croient et que tant d'autres ne croient pas?"<sup>107</sup> To which his brother replies, "C'est le mystère de la Grâce. Il faut parfois la mériter."<sup>108</sup> Before he leaves he receives the promise of Genest to think of him even for an instant every evening at eight o'clock, the hour when the Christians assemble for prayer.

The mystery of Grace is working slowly, imperceptibly in the soul of Genest. Albine and Poppée, who seemingly would retard the work of Grace, only further its action. In Albine's love for him he sees the beauty of sacrifice--"si pure, en vérité qu'il semble que le désir passe outre et qu'il n'ait rien à quoi se prendre."<sup>109</sup> But true to his profession, he refuses himself the only too natural impulse of loving her. In Poppée's passionate declarations of love he sees the emptiness and the deceits of a world in which one's desires are never satiated. So earnest is he in his study of the character of Adrien that for a moment he is captivated. "Christ est mon Dieu---Mon Dieu---" But he quickly

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

divests himself of such sentiments and laughingly derides himself, "Je me prends à mon propre jeu."<sup>110</sup>

### Act III

#### The Work of Grace is Accomplished.

Diocletian, his court and his people are gathered in the theater for the representation of the "Martyre d'Adrien." They are wildly applauding Genest and Poppée. The emperor is outdoing himself in the praises of his favorite comedians. Genest has surpassed his greatest hopes;--in fact, his rôle seems to have taken complete possession of him. Between the third and last act Poppée manages to get a few minutes alone with Genest. She again offers him her love and suggests that they flee secretly after the performance is over. It is quite evident, however that something has come over Genest--he answers her vaguely --in a strange way.

In the final act Genest no longer resists the working of Divine Grace, but, leaving the text of the play, proclaims to the crowd his faith in Christ, the God of Love. The people are infuriated, but Diocletian, thinking it is part of the play, orders silence. Genest turns to the ruler and his people and exhorts them to leave their folly and vain

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

pursuit of pleasure for the only true God, "tandis qu'il en est temps encore, de boire à la fontaine de la Grâce."<sup>111</sup> Diocletian, transported by his favorite actor's eloquence, requests him to remove his mask. His face shines with a heavenly light, and he proclaims the marvel that has been accomplished in him:

O charité d'en haut! Lorsque l'eau de ce faux baptême a coulé sur mes membres frottés de fard, soudain, par la sublime Grâce de l'esprit, cette eau de théâtre est devenue sainte et m'a lavé en une fois de tout ce qui était mensonge, complaisance et ennemi de la vérité dans mon coeur."<sup>112</sup>

At last Diocletian realizes the truth, and regretfully orders his death. Albine willingly follows her master: "Je veux croire à votre Dieu, maître." Poppée, no doubt will follow the advice Genest gives her in parting, to pray and do penance that her love for him may be purified. Diocletian, untouched by the marvels of Grace continues his customary way saying, "Je veux finir en arrosant mes choux."

That Divine Grace assumes an important rôle in this play is evident from the title itself. Yet, its action in no way annihilates the individual, but on the contrary follows the natural bend of his character. Genest's correspondence with grace is in accordance with his personality. He is sincere, loyal, and scrupulously devoted to his profession. The fulfilling of the command of the emperor

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<sup>111</sup>

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

Ibid., p. 226.

requires a threefold struggle. There is a professional drama: the artist must either conquer his repugnance and deliver himself up to his role, or forfeit his title of "artist." There is a personal drama: for the first time Genest assumes a role which awakens in him the vital question, to be a Christian or not to be one. The fact that he had severed connections with his brother because of the latter being a Christian shows that he is not indifferent in that regard. And, finally, there is a supernatural drama. Grace intervenes and makes use of all the contributing elements: the sincerity of the actor, the passions of the man, his relations towards his companions, his students, and his brother. He is free to accept or reject the grace offered. The man yields and grace is victorious. This outcome does not detract from the character of Genest, for, as the author says in the preface:

La surnature n'anéantit pas la nature; elle la pénètre, la dirige, l'exalte et se sert, pour la diriger et l'exalter des éléments humains que la nature lui propose. Comment elle les met en jeu et d'une façon nouvelle pour chaque homme, voilà de ressort du drame sacré.<sup>113</sup>

In this play Ghéon climaxed all his powers: his practical experience as a dramatist, his gifts as a poet, his talent as a writer, the personal experience of his own

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., preface, p. 13.

conversion, his profound faith. He united them all to produce this subtle religious drama. It marks a serious attempt on the part of the author to produce a work which would merit a place among the classical dramas, such as Corneille's *Polyeucte*. The critic, René Salomé, says that Genest is not unworthy of its great model. He adds that, since *Polyeucte* had always triumphed and will again triumph on the stage of the French Academy, the public would await the triumph of "*Le Comédien et la Grâce*."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> René Salomé, "*Le Comédien et la Grâce*," Etudes, Vol. 185 (1925), p. 87.



### Conclusion

Twenty years have elapsed since Henri Ghéon made his debut in the "Théâtre Chrétien." He has enjoyed the triumph of seeing his works enacted not only in Paris, but also in several other cities in France, in Holland, Switzerland, England, even in Canada. During these twenty years he has written about seventy-five plays. His zeal and activity have been unparalleled. He actually founded and directed a company of actors, Les Compagnons de Notre Dame, and, like another Molière, has taken part in his dramas, himself.

The summer of 1938 marked the close of a most successful season in the history of Ghéon's "théâtre chrétien populaire." This series of representations began in May with the Rosaire de France given on the parvis of the basilica of Lourdes before eighty thousand women of France on the occasion of their congress. On the eight and ninth of July, Le Jeu des Grandes Heures de Reims was shown in the shadow of the central porch of the famous Cathedral for the feast celebrating its restoration. Ghéon sacrificed the pleasure of witnessing this work enacted in order to extend his field of action across the Atlantic. He assisted at the representation of Les Mystères de la Messe which was given during the week of the Eucharistic Congress at Quebec

June 25. This event was a great triumph for Henri Ghéon; for, an immense crowd, composed of representatives from several countries witnessed the enactment of this sublime drama. The season closed with the creation of another play, Le Jeu de Saint Laurent du Fleuve. This was given at Montreal the 10, 11, 12, and 13 of August. Ghéon composed this play expressly for the "people fidèle" of Canada. In fact he undertook the direction of it himself, so intent was he that the interpretation might do justice to his design.

Certainly, Ghéon has proved the power that religious conviction has in motivating one's life. Never, since the day of his return to God, has he ceased to labor that others may profit by his experiences and be convinced, as he was, that one must live Catholicism.

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The thesis, "An Appreciation of Henri Gheon," written by Sister Mary Oliver Donlin, has been accepted by the Graduate School of Loyola University with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Helen L. May, Ph.D.

March 23, 1939

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